

IS DIVERSITY NECESSARY FOR EDUCATIONAL JUSTICE?

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ABSTRACT. In this article William New and Michael Merry challenge the notion that diversity serves as a good proxy for educational justice. First, they maintain that the story about how diversity might be accomplished and what it might do for students and society is internally inconsistent. Second, they argue that a disproportionate share of the benefits that might result from greater diversity often accrues to those already advantaged. Finally, they propose that many of the most promising and pragmatic remedies for educational injustice are often rejected by liberal proponents of “diversity first” in favor of remedies that in most cases are practically impossible, and often problematic on their own terms. New and Merry argue that schools that are by geography and demography not ethnically or socioeconomically diverse still can successfully confront the obstacles that their students face in creating a life they have reason to value.

Most societies worldwide are segregated along the lines of ethnicity, language, social class, religion, and even political creed. Given the discomfiting historical associations that attach to segregation in many instances — apartheid South Africa, the Jim Crow South, the Warsaw ghetto, just to name a few — its continued persistence can only be alarming, an affliction crying out for a remedy. On that basis alone, many will see segregation in itself as evidence of injustice. From this conviction it often follows that social inequities occasioned by segregation can only be mitigated through policies more carefully fine-tuned to achieve racial or social class integration.¹ Behind the “integration” rationale is a belief that benefits derive from exposure to more *diversity*, connoting both process and goal.

Diversity in the educational context generally refers to a mixed school environment, mixed most often with respect to ethnicity, ability, and social class. But the precise racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, or psychological composition a school must have to count as diverse largely remains indeterminate, and in many places to even consider numerical quotas delegitimizes the entire endeavor. In other places, societies have established exacting criteria that govern how many of which kind counts as diversity. Generally speaking, though, diversity is supposed to work something

1. Charles T. Clotfelter, *After Brown: The Rise and Retreat of School Desegregation* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006); Richard D. Kahlenberg, *All Together Now: Creating Middle-Class Schools Through Public School Choice* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2001); and Erica Frankenberg and Gary Orfield, eds., *Lessons in Integration: Realizing the Promise of Racial Diversity in America's Public Schools* (Richmond: University of Virginia Press, 2007).

like this: by virtue of the opportunities a diverse environment affords, persons from various backgrounds have the opportunity to interact with each other, learn from each other, and grow together. Where the imperative is articulated more explicitly, diversity is understood to play a key role in breaking down stereotypes and stigmas, in learning to treat those who are different and those with whom we disagree with respect, and in removing even unconscious prejudice between groups of people with different, typically conflicting, backgrounds and experience. Those who learn with and from each other when they are young, the argument goes, are bound to carry that sense of mutual respect and cooperation with them throughout their lives.

It is hard to dispute these basic claims and to argue instead that we get more valuable understanding about interpersonal, intercultural phenomena when we stay in our own rooms and keep to our own kind. Our view, though, is that one can dispute these “facts” about the benefits of diversity and still not line up with champions of apartheid or those who secrete themselves and their children away in guarded and gated communities. We offer this view without turning away from the severe, persistent poverty that aligns everywhere with the worst forms of discrimination and disadvantage. Neither do we deny the potential benefits of diversity for development of human capability and democracy. We are happy to see our own children grow up and socialize with young people radically different from themselves, and different from us, their privileged, able-bodied, professional parents. We hope they will become engaged citizens of the widest world.

But being against poverty, social exclusion, and discrimination does not necessarily translate into support for education policies whose preeminent goal is to increase student or staff diversity, and opposition to policies that permit or even support pragmatic, potentially “segregated,” alternatives. Our contention will be that much of what is said and believed about diversity is misguided, and driven further off course by the presumption that ‘everyone’ knows that diversity — however it is defined or operationalized — is the sine qua non of an education worth having. We suggest instead that in the absence of improbable changes to how voluntary and involuntary association works, diversity by itself seldom disrupts business as usual and that it frequently is not well suited to address the real harms of those who are disadvantaged. Educational injustice, as it concerns race, class, ethnicity, language, sexual preference, and so on, is simply more complicated and discomfiting than most diversity proponents imagine. We challenge the notion that diversity makes for a good proxy for educational justice and maintain that justice ought to be the preeminent goal in imagining and constructing educational spaces.

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Our essay will be organized around three arguments. First, the story about how diversity might be accomplished and what it might do for students and society is internally inconsistent, and it relies at several crucial points on hope or fear rather than on reasonable expectation. We marshal evidence that, in schools, diversity often tends to reproduce and reinforce the conditions that manufacture the intergroup tensions in the first place rather than producing a “beloved community” in which differences don’t matter. Second, a disproportionate share of the benefits that might result from greater diversity often accrues to those already advantaged. In particular we focus on how both privilege and denial operate in ways that allow members of dominant groups to co-opt or commodify diversity for their own ends. Third, many of the most promising and pragmatic remedies for educational injustice are often rejected by liberal proponents of “diversity first” in favor of remedies that in most cases are practically impossible and often problematic on their own terms. Why are alternative and more pragmatic approaches to improving the educational chances for disadvantaged students downplayed in favor of strategies that seemed doomed from the start, like undoing patterns of spatial concentration along economic lines or reversing legal and political history?

PROBLEMS WITH THE STORY OF INTEGRATION AND DIVERSITY

The harms of segregation (and resegregation) are often operationalized in the literature in terms of “exposure.”² At its most basic, the exposure narrative underlying the diversity thesis suggests that when children are put together from the start, on equal grounds, they have no reason to interpret perceivable differences between them in a negative way or to create meaningful differences out of nothing. Prejudice will have no opportunity to gain a foothold, and the net result will be more social harmony. This conceptualization is a close cousin of Gordon Allport’s mid-twentieth century “contact hypothesis”: the idea being that familiarity and more informal interactions with others unlike oneself will engender respect and intimacy rather than persistent prejudice or contempt.³

But Allport consistently stressed that at least five formidable criteria must be fulfilled before stereotypes could be challenged, before positive emotions could be experienced, and before shared concerns could be embraced and pursued. Just as difficult to achieve as when they first were published some sixty years ago, these criteria are (1) equal status between persons of different backgrounds in a particular situation; (2) common goals around which members of different backgrounds are united; (3) intergroup cooperation, in which competition is avoided or minimized; (4) the mutual recognition of some authority that can facilitate interactions and adjudicate in matters of disagreement; and finally (5) there must be informal, personal interactions between persons of different backgrounds, particularly

2. Genevieve Siegel-Hawley and Erica Frankenberg, *Southern Slippage: Growing School Segregation in the Most Desegregated Region of the Country* (Los Angeles: Civil Rights Project, 2012), <http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/mlk-national/southern-slippage-growing-school-segregation-in-the-most-desegregated-region-of-the-country/hawley-MLK-South-2012.pdf>.

3. Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1954).

between members of conflicting groups, if intimacy, respect, and meaningful interaction are to be achieved and sustained. Establishing and fostering these conditions, reliably and across various contexts, is no small feat.⁴ And in the absence of these enabling conditions, designifying these differences — even when there is the will to do so — is an improbable task.

At least three particular challenges may undo the salutary effects of exposure to diverse others. First, even very young children exhibit prejudice, as “in-group preference,” and tend to seek out and play with others like themselves more frequently than they seek out those they perceive as different.⁵ Putting children of different genders, ethnicities, religions, abilities, and cultures together in institutional settings does not necessarily or even typically cause them to display “appropriate” dispositions toward differences in social identity. Second, peer group preferences, often reinforced by free-floating social prejudices, can influence children’s views and behavior toward cultural others in unexpected and undesirable ways. Even extremely vigilant parents who consciously teach and socialize their children to view others as equal sometimes are unpleasantly surprised when their children come home from a diverse school with ideas about tolerance and equality diametrically opposite to those they have been taught at home. Third, exactly how institutions like schools ought to engage in prejudice reduction, organically and equitably, remains a puzzle, both because those called upon to do this work often are themselves not well-prepared for this difficult task and because the institutional agenda — as most teachers quickly come to realize — is so often self-contradicting. Teachers are often asked, for instance, to serve competing policy agendas, implemented with little consideration by school administrators. In one instance, for example, teachers in a Greek school with a large Roma student population were asked in one “language enrichment” class to treat these students as “deficient” by virtue of their ethnicity and home language, but were admonished in the following class to think of the Roma students no differently than other Greek students, and to treat them “equally.”⁶ In this kind of environment, even explicit efforts at promoting understanding and tolerance between children and youth from disparate backgrounds cannot reliably produce the kinds of dispositions that advocates of

4. John F. Dovidio, Peter Glick, and Laurie Rudman, eds., *On The Nature of Prejudice: Fifty Years After Allport* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2005).

5. Frances E. Aboud, *Children and Prejudice* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988); Drew Nesdale et al., “Threat, Group Identification, and Children’s Ethnic Prejudice,” *Social Development* 14, no. 2 (May 2005): 189–205; Zvi Bekerman, “On Their Way Somewhere: Integrated Bilingual Palestinian Jewish Education in Israel,” in *Alternative Education for the Twenty-First Century: Philosophies, Approaches, Visions*, eds. Philip Woods and Glenys Woods (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 123–138; Maykel Verkuyten, “Attitudes Among Minority and Majority Children: The Role of Ethnic Identification, Peer Group Victimization, and Parents,” *Social Development* 11, no. 4 (2002): 558–570; and Maykel Verkuyten and Jochem Thijs, “Ethnic and Gender Bias Among Dutch and Turkish Children in Late Childhood: The Role of Social Context,” *Infant and Child Development* 10, no. 4 (2001): 203–217.

6. William S. New, “You Don’t Have to Know Who You Are to Know Who You’re Not: Stigma, Nation, and the Performance of Greek Romani Identity,” *International Journal of Romani Language and Culture* 1, no. 2 (2012): 49–73.

diversity intend, and explicit efforts are much less common in schools than passive approaches grounded in the mere fact of mutual exposure.⁷

None of this means that reducing prejudice is unimportant or that schools ought to abandon efforts to do so. If anything, we should all be more consciously active in these efforts in our personal and institutional lives. And it *is* possible to reduce prejudice, just as it is possible to reduce the academic and/or cognitive gap between children from different groups, and both effects can be long-lasting.⁸ But most successful methods of prejudice reduction and intergroup dialogue require often radically different approaches to learning, teaching and being together that are at loggerheads with the efficiency-based approaches to education that define the reality of most state-funded schools on every continent. Contemporary state schools across the world are constrained by explicit learning targets; curricula ignore the histories of entire populations; teachers are discouraged from speaking openly about sensitive social issues such as race, class, religion, and language difference; and testing regimes dictate what, when, and how pupils learn and with whom, for the most part, they spend their time in school. What little unregulated time is left over generally facilitates social interactions among peers who typically share either similar backgrounds or preferences. Many left-leaning academics — if not the elected officials for whom they vote — decry the new regime of efficiency and accountability, just as they decry discrimination. But they also tend to oppose creating schools outside the traditional systems, where breaking from the efficiency agenda, while also confronting more explicitly race, class, and language issues, is more likely.

If we look to the history and current practice of most school systems, we know that public (or, alternatively, comprehensive state) schools historically have disadvantaged certain groups of pupils and that, despite many reforms and much improvement, this continues to be the case. A massive literature exists on tracking mechanisms and ability grouping and the differentiated expectations that correspond to those distinctions,⁹ discriminatory disciplinary procedures,¹⁰ and

7. Ellen Swartz, "Diversity: Gatekeeping Knowledge and Maintaining Inequalities," *Review of Educational Research* 79, no. 2 (2009): 1044–1083.

8. Nicholas A. Bowman, "College Diversity Experiences and Cognitive Development: A Meta-Analysis," *Review of Educational Research* 80, no. 1 (2010): 4–33.

9. Dylan Conger, "Within-School Segregation in an Urban District," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 27, no. 3 (2005): 225–244; Tomeka M. Davis, "School Choice and Segregation: 'Tracking' Racial Equity in Magnet Schools," *Education and Urban Society* (2012): 1–35; Demetra Kalogrides and Susanna Loeb, "Different Teachers, Different Peers: The Magnitude of Student Sorting Within Schools," *Educational Researcher* 42, no. 6 (2013): 304–316; Samuel R. Lucas, *Tracking Inequality: Stratification and Mobility in American High Schools* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999); Sean Kelly and Heather Price, "The Correlates of Tracking Policy: Opportunity Hoarding, Status Competition, or a Technical-Functional Explanation?," *American Educational Research Journal* 48, no. 3 (2011): 560–585; Jeannie Oakes, *Keeping Track: How Schools Structure Inequality*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2005); and Christine H. Rossell, David J. Armour, Herbert J. Walberg, eds., *School Desegregation in the Twenty-First Century* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 2002).

10. Christine A. Christie, Kristine Jolivet, and Michael C. Nelson, "Breaking the School to Prison Pipeline: Identifying School Risk and Protective Factors for Youth Delinquency," *Exceptionality* 13,

a disproportionately high number of referrals to special education for minority pupils.¹¹ Indeed, the ironies of advocating for *more* diversity are difficult to miss when we appreciate the totalizing ways in which traditional public schools leverage distinctions between pupils in the service of reproducing those distinctions, distinctions that correspond neatly to systems of advantage and disadvantage.¹²

An additional “unintended consequence” of tracking and differentiation is that the distinctions these systems produce are made visible to everyone, with the potential of reinforcing stigma, feelings of entitlement, and biased expectations. A young white middle-class man attending a diverse high school, himself headed for university, is unfortunately seldom surprised to learn that one of his poor and ethnic minority classmates has been arrested or has left school for some other reason. He believes this because he has not seen his poor and ethnic minority classmates in his advanced courses, and he has seen some of them getting into trouble. It does not seem to us that these kinds of judgments are the intended dispositional outcomes of diversity. Intraschool differentiation of opportunity, which has been an enduring characteristic of diverse schools, tends to undermine the promise of social mobility and to enforce its opposite, namely, reproduction of social inequality.¹³

Exposure is also meant to promote educational justice by increasing the access of disadvantaged children to the cultural and social capital of their more advantaged peers. The supporting premise is that schools attended by pupils whose parents have more resources will also nearly always have more resources, through a variety of mechanisms. These resources may include things like advanced skill in the languages of power, habits and manners of the dominant society, better course offerings, more experienced teachers, more and newer supplies, and better facilities. Exposure to this resource-rich environment will, according to this

no. 2 (2005): 69–88; and Pedro A. Noguera, “Schools, Prisons, and Social Implications of Punishment: Rethinking Disciplinary Practices,” *Theory Into Practice* 42, no. 4 (2003): 341–350.

11. Beth Harry and Janette K. Klingner, *Why Are So Many Minority Studies in Special Education? Understanding Race and Disability in Schools* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2006).

12. Pierre Bourdieu, *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power* (Palo Alto, California: Stanford University Press, 1988). Of course these realities are well documented and in fact appear year after year in the scholarly literature. As such, they also are well known to diversity advocates. Even so, they curiously do little to dampen the confidence some manifest concerning what diversity (or, more problematically, “integration”) purportedly will do. For example, in one recent study we find this bold claim: “Integration negates segregation by comprehensively restructuring intergroup associations on the basis of equality, inclusion, and full participation in all dimensions of public life, but especially in education, the economy, and politics.” On the following page, however, the authors concede, as if by afterthought: “In practice, many demographically desegregated schools are not truly integrated because of Eurocentric curricula, school climates, and racially correlated curricular tracking.” Roslyn Arlin Mickelson and Mokubung Nkomo, “Integrated Schooling, Life Course Outcomes, and Social Cohesion in Multiethnic Democratic Societies,” *Review of Research in Education* 36, no. 1 (2012): 203–204.

13. Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1976); Randall Collins, *The Credential Society: An Historical Sociology of Education and Stratification* (New York: Academic Press, 1979); and Michael S. Merry, *Equality, Citizenship and Segregation: A Defense of Separation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

argument, improve the social mobility of disadvantaged pupils. The promise of increased social mobility for those whose prospects are otherwise limited rests on the assumption that by virtue of diversity they will be able to acquire more social, cultural, and economic capital than if they remain with others like themselves. This social and economic capital can then be exchanged for better diplomas and career opportunities. The mechanism by which this exchange of value is supposed to happen, though, is not specified in most accounts. One is left to wonder how privilege might be persuaded to “rub off.” And if wealth were meant to rub off, why, then, wouldn’t poverty rub off as well?

The social mobility thesis has been put to the test quite explicitly in the higher education systems of the countries that have adopted strong affirmative action policies. India, for instance, with a long, troubled history of excluding broad swaths of the youth population from formal education and economic opportunity, has since its independence in 1947 maintained a system in which as many as 50 percent of public university seats are reserved for members of historically marginalized classes, including girls and women. A primary motivation of these policies is to “remove social ... disabilities ... suffered on account of ... social segregation and spatial and cultural isolation,” which is complemented by the desire “to facilitate and promote equal participation with others ... in organised sectors of the country’s economic and political life.”¹⁴ In other words, the aim is to promote social mobility, operationalized here as full participation. In Israel, similar efforts to promote diversity have been advanced for Sephardic Jews, immigrants descending from Eastern and North African countries who are, relative to their richer and more educated Ashkenazi counterparts, very disadvantaged in the modern Israeli state. Like India, the purpose of the affirmative action programs in Israel is not to compensate for past discrimination but rather to try and reduce more egregious inequalities by bringing the more socially disadvantaged into increased contact with the socially advantaged, thereby supposedly improving education and career prospects.¹⁵

But research on the outcomes of reserved-seat policies suggests that the benefits with respect to social mobility, or more fulfilling economic participation, have flowed to the more advantaged sectors of the disadvantaged classes — what in India are referred to as the “creamy layer” — leaving the masses of underprivileged youth more or less where they were, at the bottom.¹⁶ Similar trends are noted with loan programs in the United States meant to provide increased college access to minority students and thereby increase the racial, ethnic, or social class diversity of the universities and the social mobility of the students. But it seems that providing

14. D. L. Sheth, “Reservation Policy Revisited,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 22, no. 46 (1987): 1957–1962.

15. Yaacov Iram and Mirjam Schmida, *The Educational System of Israel* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1998).

16. Sukhadeo Thorat and Chiitaranjan Senapati, “Reservation Policy in India — Dimensions and Issues,” *Working Paper Series* 1, no. 2 (2006): 1–63.

access to higher education through these loan programs benefits mostly those students who were already relatively advantaged with respect to race and prior educational history.¹⁷

In North America and Europe, when we confine our gaze to the admission of disadvantaged pupils to the best universities, there seems to be good reason to accept the proposition that exposure increases social mobility. Even if the campus climate with regard to race and social class often remains chilly, socioeconomically disadvantaged graduates of Oxford or Princeton appear to have a distinct leg up in comparison to their former classmates in urban high schools who either never made it to university at all, or else who only managed to attend “lesser” institutions or did not persist long enough to earn degrees. We can point to the many highly successful men and women of humble origins who have risen in significant part because their education gave them the opportunity to join the “ruling classes.”¹⁸ But even as the middle and affluent classes in virtually all historically disadvantaged groups have expanded in recent decades, it remains undeniably the case that most of those of humble origin — owing largely to economic forces beyond their control — have slipped further down the ladder. For large portions of these populations, there are no ladders in sight, none even in the common imagination, challenging both simplistic notions of identity-based solidarity, on the one hand, as well as naïve proposals about spatial concentration disruptions, on the other.¹⁹

DIVERSITY AND MAJORITY BENEFIT

The notion that parents, administrators, and professors of racial/ethnic or class privilege are likely to accept “diversity” only if there is no perceived cost in terms of the academic opportunities for their own children and others like them receives little attention from liberal diversity advocates.²⁰ It is our experience that many privileged parents — including college professors with Leftist allegiances — publicly champion the integration of all schools while privately acting as if

17. Charles E. Menifield, “Lottery Funded Scholarships in Tennessee: Increased Access but Weak Retention for Minority Students,” *Journal of Education Finance* 38, no. 1 (2012): 3–17.

18. This phenomenon echoes the lessons of W. E. B. Du Bois’s “talented tenth,” an idea suggesting that an educated and hence privileged elite from underprivileged groups would bring their leadership and acquired social capital to bear positively upon the less fortunate members of their respective groups. The result would be massive moral and social uplift. See W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Talented Tenth,” in *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative Negroes of Today*, ed. Booker T. Washington (New York: J. Pott and Company, 1903). But in the hundred or so years since the publication of Du Bois’s essay, we have been taught the limits of what the talented tenth might accomplish.

19. Lawrence D. Bobo, “Somewhere Between Jim Crow and Post-Racialism: Reflections on the Racial Divide in America Today,” *Daedalus* 140, no. 2 (2011): 11–36; and Tommie Shelby, *We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 2005).

20. Derrick Bell, “Diversity’s Distractions,” *Columbia Law Review* 103, no. 6 (2003): 1622–1633; David Gilbourn, “Education Policy as an Act of White Supremacy: Whiteness, Critical Race Theory, and Education Reform,” *Journal of Education Policy* 20, no. 4 (2005): 485–505; and Michele S. Moses and Mitchell J. Chang, “Toward a Deeper Understanding of the Diversity Rationale,” *Educational Researcher* 35, no. 1 (2006): 6–11.

this same inclusion represented a threat to academic “excellence,” that is, as a threat to the quality of their own children’s educational opportunity. Diversity, in this case, becomes the benevolent gesture that hesitatingly welcomes pupils who many believe are underprepared and whose presence — in sufficient numbers — might well compromise school quality. Choosing diversity can be constructed as a sacrifice because privileged parents have the freedom to choose alternative settings that they feel would better satisfy their children’s interests.²¹ Parents of means who enroll their children in diverse schools, when they have other choices, often seem to feel that they have thus contributed something important to educational justice, and this belief may be socially reinforced by other parents who share the same conviction.²²

We can illustrate this phenomenon through examination of a recent study championing diversity efforts that seek to counter demographic realities related to spatial segregation along racial and class lines in New York City. Allison Roda and Amy Stewart Wells begin their study with the claim that “we” know

that race-conscious school choice policies, while not perfect, are much more successful at creating diverse and high-quality public schools and a more balanced and equal educational system. ... We also know that attending racially and socioeconomically diverse schools benefits all students, including white students, and tends to result in higher academic achievement and attainment and foster other short- and long-term social benefits.²³

The context is a “majority-minority” urban district experiencing gentrification, which has brought a group of mostly white, relatively affluent, highly educated parents and their children into the district. The district enables a degree of school choice, with the purpose of mitigating racial and economic “segregation,” by enticing white, professional-class parents to choose to place their children in diverse public school classrooms — albeit classes for the “gifted and talented” — rather than opting for more selective private schools.

Roda and Wells report two main incentives for the affluent parents to participate in the school choice plan: first, public school is free and private alternatives are extremely expensive; and second, the social values of the parents support sending their children to diverse, neighborhood schools, for the good it might do for their own children, for the children of their less-privileged neighbors, and for the neighborhood and city as a whole. The success of the policy was mixed at best, as the choices of advantaged parents seemed often, unintentionally, to reproduce the segregated enrollment trends the policy was meant to defeat. That is, privileged

21. Ellen Brantlinger, *Dividing Classes: How the Middle Class Negotiates and Rationalizes School Advantage* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Diane Reay, “The Zombie Stalking English Schools: Social Class and Educational Inequality,” *British Journal of Educational Studies* 54, no. 3 (2006): 288–307; and Diane Reay, Gill Crozier, and David James, *White Middle-Class Identities and Urban Schooling* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

22. Matthew Clayton and David Stevens, “School Choice and the Burdens of Justice,” *Theory and Research in Education* 2, no. 2 (2004): 111–126.

23. Allison Roda and Amy Stuart Wells, “School Choice Policies and Racial Segregation: Where White Parents’ Good Intentions, Anxiety and Privilege Collide,” *American Journal of Education* 119, no. 2 (2013): 261–293.

parents tended to avoid or reject school assignments that would place their children in the minority, with the result that the classrooms that they found acceptable were disproportionately comprised of children like their own. Majority-minority schools and classrooms were generally judged to be of lower quality, for many reasons, than schools in which disadvantaged students were in the minority. The authors report that privileged parents are frustrated by this outcome, and they propose revisions to current policies that (somewhat magically, it seems) would resolve this conflict.

But we might also ask whether the source of the frustration for these parents is the realization that their children's experience of diversity — as a complement to traditional educational opportunities — was half the draw of “going public” in the first place. As we have seen, diversity, on the one hand, is represented as the means by which the less fortunate can be acculturated into the dominant class, that is, as the potential for social mobility. But, on the other hand, it is believed to have the potential to bestow some antiracist dispositions on children whose social mobility is not in question. This antiracist disposition, often reinforced at home by well-educated parents, is understood (correctly) as a form of cultural capital that operates to distinguish its bearers from those lacking the taste and discernment to recognize the kinds of differences that one ought to tolerate and those that it is permissible to notice. That is, the liberal perspective on diversity becomes a class marker, the kind of thing one can include on a CV or a university application.

While discourse about resegregation of primary and secondary education tends to focus on what exposure to advantaged children can do for the disadvantaged, typically the core consideration in discussions about diversifying universities is what diversity can do for *everyone*, including majority students advantaged by race/ethnicity and class. Diverse settings in higher education are supposed to provide an opportunity for robust dialogue in which multiple, highly contrasting perspectives might be brought to bear, increasing the depth and breadth of student understanding and the range of solutions to problems that can be envisioned. Students with these kinds of experiences, the argument runs, have greater potential for democratic citizenship. Common wisdom among university students tends toward the proposition that diversity helps privileged students understand the perspectives of less privileged minorities, and, in exchange, the minority students receive the benefit of a superior university education and degree. In other words, the learning situation for majority and minority students can never be reciprocal, and it is even less reciprocal when only a “critical mass” of minority students — at most 20 percent at the best universities — trouble the environment of the majority. As eloquently chronicled by authors like Frantz Fanon and Ralph Ellison, persons from minority groups almost always know more about majority culture and lifeways than people from majority groups know about minority life, which is often invisible or grossly misrepresented in mainstream media, textbooks, tradition, and everyday conversation.²⁴

24. See, for example, Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lamm Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967); and Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York: Random House, 1952).

We have observed in our own university teaching how many underrepresented minority students are deeply ambivalent about the roles they are pressed into playing in “diverse classrooms” — diverse only by virtue of their very presence. Many grow fatigued with having their experiences either challenged or invalidated (often through silence) by others in the room. Alison Jones describes a pedagogical experiment in New Zealand, where she placed her Pakeha (white) students in separate sections of the same class as her Maori students. The Pakeha students were unhappy with the arrangement, expressing the desire to hear the viewpoints of their Maori peers, but the Maori students expressed relief and excitement about the experience of being in class without their Pakeha peers. In the segregated setting they felt much more comfortable expressing themselves, without the pressure of being someone else’s “other.”²⁵

This same ambivalence and fatigue is also sometimes expressed by women who feel compelled by teachers and institutions to enlighten their male classmates about the lives and thoughts of women, without themselves receiving equal benefit from gender diversity since there is little about male character or behavior that has been hidden from them. Even seasoned multicultural educators in higher education often report finding it “saddening and emotionally draining to witness the power denial and bias [of their privileged students], knowing all too well the impact these have on the daily experiences of those marked as different.”²⁶

In this context it is not unreasonable to ask whether the unyielding push for diversity does more for the already advantaged than it does for the disadvantaged. This question is more acute when applied in the context of university enrollment goals. It is hard to imagine what good the admission of the “talented tenth” of minority students — a target taken almost literally at the University of Texas at Austin, for example — is going to do for the other 90 percent of disadvantaged students, particularly when minority groups are themselves often segregated by social class. On the other hand, the presence of a critical mass of disadvantaged students, a majority of them black and brown, brings a tangible benefit to the university keen to improve its image as an equal opportunity institution in a multicultural world. Moreover, the presence of a critical mass of disadvantaged students ostensibly benefits the other students of the university, who can learn from their classmates how the other half lives without the threat of surrendering their race/ethnic- or class-based privileges.²⁷ Perhaps it is the case that inequality-sensitive, justice-conscious parents of privilege cannot help but notice the lack of diversity and the inequalities it connotes.

25. Alison Jones, “The Limits of Cross-Cultural Dialogue: Pedagogy, Desire, and Absolution in the Classroom,” *Educational Theory* 49, no. 3 (1999): 299–316.

26. Leswin Laubscher and Susan Powell, “Skinning the Drum: Teaching about Diversity as ‘Other,’” *Harvard Education Review* 73, no. 2 (2003): 203–224.

27. Frances Kendall, *Understanding White Privilege: Creating Pathways to Authentic Relationships Across Race*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013).

The desire for diversity, then, might be understood as a way to feel better about oneself and one's choices. This might be why, among the vast array of possible remedies for inadequate education for the less privileged, diversity is hit upon as the prime lever of educational justice. This is not to say that middle-class parents do not sincerely agonize over inequality or wish to do something about it. Nor does it mean that there are not very real priority conflicts one must confront, including, as we have just seen, whether or not to send one's child to a local school based on the belief that doing so will make some contribution to educational justice. But to us it seems that the argument for diversity-as-cure for prejudice or inequality is sometimes grounded either in a kind of morally dubious pity or an ill-informed nostalgia.²⁸ With respect to pity, we find the belief that the disadvantaged are in essence victims, and should be treated as such, continues to prevail. The logic of this belief dictates that the disadvantaged can only achieve success through the beneficent intervention of the advantaged. And with respect to nostalgia, we find a yearning for a state of affairs that, historically, never actually existed, a luminous moment of ethnic or economic harmony in the past to which we can or should harken back.²⁹ But there never was such a moment; in fact, things were mostly much worse.

REMEDIES FOR EDUCATIONAL INJUSTICE

Our third argument begins with the observation that proponents of diversity advocate for integration policies that are doomed either by demographics or law, and they eschew other more pragmatic and effective remedies that cannot wait for improbable diversity-related strategies to materialize. In higher education, the preferred mechanism to diversify student bodies and faculty is some form of affirmative action with respect to admission, which, notwithstanding its many problems, has brought many disadvantaged individuals and their families out of poverty. We have also already seen that in some places, like Israel and India, quotas and other kinds of reserved-seat policies ensure that a higher percentage of disadvantaged applicants gain admission than if criteria for admission were merit-based. That

28. This was the general thrust of Derrick Bell's original critique of the *Brown v. Board* decision and its reception by the liberal establishment (Derrick Bell, "Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest-Convergence Dilemma," *Harvard Law Review* 93, no. 3 (1980): 518–533). In subsequent publications, Bell argued against the patronizing spirit of much civil rights reform, including the common rationale for school integration. Bell insisted the "permanence of racism" could not be undone through diversity initiatives, but required a much more focused confrontation with white privilege and the manners in which power could be exercised to protect this privilege. See, for example, Derrick Bell, *Silent Covenants: Brown v. Board of Education and the Unfulfilled Hopes for Racial Reform* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

29. Diane Ravitch's paean to the public school she attended in 1940s and 1950s segregated Houston, Texas, which serves as prelude to the rejection of "choice," is a good example of this brand of nostalgia. She writes, "Everyone I knew went to the neighborhood public school. Every child on my block and in my neighborhood went to the same elementary school, the same junior high school, and the same high school. We car-pooled together; we cheered for the same teams; we went to the same after-school events; we traded stories about our teachers" (p. 113). Diane Ravitch, *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).

these economic advances have not always been accompanied by a reduction in the racial, ethnic, or cultural stigma to which they are subjected can be taken as one of the limitations of this strategy for social mobility. Moreover, in the United States and many other countries (for example, South Africa and Brazil³⁰), preferred admission policies may or may not serve the purposes that originally motivated them, or they have been curtailed on legal grounds as discriminatory. Whatever the case, it must be obvious to everyone that even the strongest affirmative action policies in higher education cannot undo the galactic differences in academic attainment between social and economic groups that continue to be the outcome of primary and secondary education worldwide.

If increasing student diversity at the elementary and secondary levels is taken to be the best way out of this box, there are three policy options. First, parents from all stations could be required, or strongly encouraged through incentives, to relocate and thus self-integrate. Second, we could redraw the lines between school districts and catchment areas so that they cut across ethnic/economic divides, rather than retaining political boundaries that enforce and reproduce divides between populations. Third, we could transport pupils away from their homes to attend more integrated schools. None of these remedies, history suggests, are very practical, and even if they were, the presumptions that undergird them are open to critique. Further, none of these strategies is likely to preclude residential segregation resulting from the exercise of voluntary (or involuntary) association.

Internationally, residential segregation in most large cities has surpassed the point at which expecting parents to change their place of residence makes sense, certainly if we count socioeconomic diversity as equally important to interethnic/class/religious diversity. Poor parents cannot afford to live on the Champs-Élysées or Fifth Avenue and wealthier parents are not likely to move their families to the favelas of Buenos Aires or the slums of Johannesburg. But the cost of real estate is not the only consideration. In liberal societies the prized value of being able to associate with others of one's own choosing typically works against diversity-promoting initiatives. Voluntary association more often than not will tend toward homogeneity, as people generally prefer to live close to others like themselves in all the ways that matter. Additionally, liberal democratic societies provide legal guarantees of freedom with respect to residence and school choice that are not likely to be reversed in favor of values seen as more abstract and impersonal. This exercise of freedom is "naturally" more restricted for the poor

30. Both South Africa and Brazil have pursued affirmative action policies in the workplace and the university with the aim of correcting for flagrant historical injustices, ones disproportionately favoring those of European descent. There is some evidence of modest success, yet efforts to promote diversity in primary and secondary schools run up against many of the same challenges faced by schools in other countries where residential patterns, peer effects, and choice mechanisms facilitate limited interaction. See André Cicalo, *Urban Encounters: Affirmative Action and Black Identities in Brazil* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); and Neville Alexander, "Affirmative Action and the Perpetuation of Racial Identities in Post-Apartheid South Africa," *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa* 63 (2007): 92–108.

and culturally other than for the well positioned and the culturally favored, who can always navigate the system more efficiently no matter where they live. The poor and culturally marginalized are routinely unable to exercise this guaranteed freedom, either due to an inability to resist the economic tides of social exclusion, or because they are forcibly moved from where they wish to be to where someone else wishes them to be.³¹ Involuntary movement and association tend to produce homogeneity, just as voluntary association does.³²

Disparity in the ability or opportunity to exercise the freedom of movement is one root of the problem of segregation, prompting some to push for restrictive choice policies or quotas. In some European countries, proposals annually circulate calling for school registration times that would give less privileged parents a chance to enroll in the school of their choice. To date, most of these efforts have yielded precious little in terms of greater diversity.³³ In the Netherlands, for instance, where segregation indices rival those in the United States, efforts to desegregate various municipalities (for example, Nijmegen, Deventer, and Gouda), either through bussing schemes or by restricting the options that parents have, generally have had very little effect. Not only do parents enjoy the constitutional right to choose an education they think is best (more often than not, a state-funded denominational school), when push comes to shove, nothing prevents determined parents from changing their address or navigating the system in other ways advantageous to their interests.³⁴

Meanwhile, in the United States, the courts have increasingly blocked this kind of affirmative action.³⁵ But even if politically or legally feasible, this kind of social engineering does little to impede other structural factors from maintaining or increasing current levels of residential segregation. These include transportation issues; limited seats available at the most desirable schools; selection criteria at the point of entry that set quotas on the types of pupils to be admitted; grouping and tracking mechanisms inside of schools that sort and select pupils in ways often consistent with social class background; parental advocacy behaviors that ensure some types of preferential treatment; and peer group effects that may or may not be conducive to academic achievement. Nor can we ignore the macro-level economic

31. Tom Slater, "Expulsions from Public Housing: The Hidden Context of Concentrated Affluence," *Cities* 35 (December 2013): 384–390.

32. See Merry, *Equality, Citizenship and Segregation*.

33. See, for example, the different European country reports in Joep Bakker et al., eds., *International Perspectives on Countering School Segregation* (Antwerp: Garant, 2010).

34. Maaïke van Houten, "Elite kiest een school met 'ons soort mensen'" [The elite chooses a school with "our kind of people"], *Trouw*, December 15, 2010; "Scholen in Nijmegen nog altijd zwart-wit ondanks advies" [Schools in Nijmegen still segregated notwithstanding (policy) advice], *Trouw*, November 2, 2011; and Rob Pietersen, "Geen geloof meer in gemengde scholen" [No more faith in mixed schools], *Trouw*, October 9, 2013.

35. Most notably in *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*, 551 U.S. 701 (2007), and *Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education*, 548, U.S. 938 (2006).

forces related to our neoliberal economic regime that exacerbate inequalities and drive competition between schools, gentrification, ghettoization and rural impoverishment, among other segregating social phenomena.

Given existing levels of residential segregation — urban, suburban, and rural — it is also not practically possible (and almost always politically impossible) to redraw the lines that determine attendance in ways that would produce more diversity.³⁶ And efforts to mix schools are not even feasible in many cities (whether in Brussels, Belgium; Bradford, UK; or Boston, Massachusetts), where the public school population in many catchment areas either is overwhelmingly middle class and white, or poor and nonwhite. That is to say, diversity is not an option. Even when a neighborhood does happen to be mixed, local schools often are not. This occurs because parents avail themselves of their legal rights to select a school that conforms to their preferences for their own child.

Whether parents avail themselves of open enrollment options, educate at home, or go private does not really matter, for exercising their choice is in keeping with guarantees to be found in various international treaties and nearly all national constitutions. Perhaps even more important than these legal guarantees are the liberal underpinnings of democracy itself, built on the explicit foundation of delivering citizens as much liberty as is feasibly possible. Furthermore, in opting for a school that is less diverse, parents need not overtly base their choices on an eagerness to avoid children unlike their own. If asked, they need only offer the socially acceptable (and often empirically verifiable) reason that their child will have better educational chances at the school they have chosen. And if school alternatives are not available or local options are restricted, nothing in principle can prevent determined parents from changing residence in order to access a school that satisfies their, or their child's, interests. The willingness to relocate on the promise of "better schools" is not limited to parents of means: families in poverty will often take heroic measures to gain what they perceive to be opportunities for their children's advancement. This is, after all, a primary push factor for immigration.

Transporting students from segregated to more integrated settings might offer more attractive prospects than reorganizing school districts and municipalities or expecting parents to move in the interest of diversity. Whether through transfer programs, magnet schools, vouchers, or other desegregation schemes, transportation does get some disadvantaged children redistributed to better schools. Champions of diversity often point to the successes of these alternatives, even when modest, but intractable structural problems persist. First, the traffic is almost exclusively in one direction, disadvantaged children going to higher quality majority schools: majority-minority schools remain mostly segregated, but without some of their best students, who have taken advantage of the opportunity to attend higher

36. Ann Mantil, Anne G. Perkins, and Stephanie Aberger, "The Challenge of High-Poverty Schools: How Feasible Is Socioeconomic School Integration?," in *The Future of School Integration: Socioeconomic Diversity as an Education Reform Strategy*, ed. Richard D. Kahlenberg (New York: Century Foundation Press, 2012), 155–222.

status schools. This “natural” outcome is legitimized by the dubious premise, related to the exposure perspective, that what minority students need most is access to majority institutions and majority peers. Second, there is powerful evidence to impugn the salvific effects of diversity without other enabling conditions being present. Indeed, a number of studies have shown that “attempts to engineer the types of ‘ideal’ communities that policy analysts or academics envision by moving large numbers of residents across a city will never end well.”³⁷

ALTERNATIVES TO DIVERSITY-CENTERED REFORM

Perhaps the most alarming aspect of much pro-diversity advocacy in education is the rejection of any reform strategy that does not foreground diversity, no matter what other benefits the strategy might promise. This is most visible in the stridency of liberal opposition to high-achievement charter schools in the United States, academies in the UK, and ethnically and religiously homogenous schools serving the disadvantaged in many other parts of the world. Many suspect, no doubt, that every alternative to the traditional integration agenda signals an “erosion of the public,” particularly when state services have seen massive cutbacks in recent years and austerity measures threaten further what public institutions are able to do. Fear for a public domain under siege by global market capitalism and the champions of standardization is certainly legitimate, and of concern to anyone who wants more than training for the consumer culture for everyone’s children.

But this rhetorical “public” is required to carry even more weight than “diversity” in many school reform arguments. To interpret every alternative to the pro-diversity agenda, even when effective or justice-promoting, as a proxy for “privatization” only turns argument into polemic. Likewise, to hold alternative conceptions of the “public” hostage to dreams of an ideal democratic education that never was results in the preemptive rejection of valuable modes of resisting structural harms and systemic disadvantage. We need to resist the tropes of the popular conversation about “what we need to do,” which tend to rely on a polarizing nomenclature — public versus private, liberal versus conservative, minority versus majority — and obscures or trivializes issues of justice by reducing the range of permissible solutions one might consider.

Can we imagine justice-promoting educational alternatives for which diversity is not a litmus test? To pose this question is not to dismiss the potential value of diversity, but rather to put the putative goals of diversification — which we define generally in terms of justice — ahead of the means of achieving these goals. It is our suspicion that diversification of student body, faculty, and staff is often pursued in place of undertaking the more politically difficult task of rooting out prejudice among the privileged and of reorganizing institutions so that they don’t perpetuate inequality. We should begin with the recognition that there are *multiple paths to educational justice*, or, to turn this slightly, by recognizing that there are multiple

37. Patrick Sharkey, *Stuck in Place: Urban Neighborhoods and the End of Progress Toward Racial Equality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 175.

publics, each with its own particular circumstances and its own perspectives on what counts as justice.

Nancy Fraser urges us to conceive of a cornucopia of spaces in which persons can congregate around shared interests and aims that serve their communities as well as the society at large.³⁸ Another aspect of this argument is the recognition that many alternative publics, whose participation in the public is severely limited by subordinate status and a lack of resources, do not experience policies enacted for “everyone’s good” as actually serving their interests. In terms of policies that would further educational justice, the consideration of multiple publics entails subordination of the controlling concept of diversity to other goals, not necessarily stipulated in advance, but instead responsive to local conditions and to the full participation of those affected in the process.

In this light, we can better see that neither the homogeneity nor heterogeneity of a school’s student body — whether along lines of ethnicity, gender, religion, or social class — determines the presence or absence of relevant enabling conditions for educational justice. Schools that are by geography and demography not ethnically or socioeconomically diverse still can successfully confront the obstacles that their students face in creating a life they have reason to value. It goes without saying that this will be easier where the obstacles are less Himalayan. In particular, dealing with the challenges that concentrations of poverty and residential instability bring requires tremendous ingenuity, commitment, and extra resources. But resources can take different forms. Moreover, various forms of solidarity, self-governance, and mobilization often are more feasible when spatial concentrations exist.³⁹ Indeed, researchers have found that high levels of “collective efficacy” can be exhibited even in neighborhoods that score high on concentrated poverty.⁴⁰

In thinking of alternatives to the diversity agenda for school improvement, we continue to focus on issues of inequality and on whether schools ensure that pupils gain, in Amartya Sen’s usage, the basic capabilities requisite for an education worthy of the name.⁴¹ To meet the basic thresholds of equality and capability, schools must succeed not only in fostering the self-respect of their pupils, but also in exhibiting equitable treatment: equally high expectations, equally rigorous learning opportunities, and equal concern that each child succeed. Further, in these less diverse schools, promoting educational justice often means creating a definable culture, focusing on group differences in achievement, disproportionality

38. Nancy Fraser, *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the “Postsocialist” Condition* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

39. See Merry, *Equality, Citizenship and Segregation*.

40. Among other things, the theory of collective efficacy holds that both shared expectations for social control and strategic connections among a community’s members can yield effective action, provided there are ample levels of working trust and social interaction. See Robert J. Sampson, *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

41. Amartya Sen, *The Idea of Justice* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009).

in disciplinary referrals, dropout rates, school violence, solidarity among marginalized pupils, problems of apathy and disaffection, and all the other familiar features common to run-of-the-mill integrated and segregated public schools.

School reformers in this mold strive to give parents more options for their child's education and to deliver more efficient educational services to places where options either are few, substandard, or nonexistent. The advocates of these reforms, among whom we count ourselves, are not naïve about the severity of the needs facing disadvantaged children. They know, for instance, that one cannot rely upon neat formulas, charismatic leaders, or isolated success stories. They also know that enabling conditions must be school-specific yet also broader than the school: better health care and housing; better nutrition and exercise; more robust weighted pupil funding that targets poverty and disability; incentives to more equitably distribute and retain high-quality principals and teachers; curricular and pedagogical innovation; and so on.

We are under no delusions about the formidable challenges these pragmatic alternatives to the diverse, but still traditional public, school entail. There are also limits to what can be achieved with respect to diminishing intergroup conflict and prejudice without bringing people of different groups together in one place. If we reconsider Allport's five criteria for reducing stereotype and promoting intimacy, respect, and meaningful interaction, the demand for informal, personal interactions between persons of different backgrounds obviously is not accomplished in schools without intergroup diversity. But the other enabling conditions can be met, often to much higher degree, in alternative spaces where enacting relations of equal status and mutual recognition — Allport's first two criteria — is a shared goal. Many alternative schools do not realize this goal, or realize other academic goals either, but that does not disqualify them as a class. It only makes them as imperfect as most regular public and state schools, where enacting relations of equal status and mutual respect, even in the presence of diversity, rarely enters the conversation about institutional priorities. In this context, advocates of alternatives to diversity-centered reform have good reason to believe that educational justice does not hinge on the environment being diverse. They also know that "diversity" per se does not count among the most pressing concerns for disadvantaged children, at least not in the sense in which diversity advocates typically use the term.⁴² In fact, many often see the diversity agenda — at least as it is enacted in mainstream institutions — as working *against* educational justice.

We are not advocating for or defending any particular type of school here. Rather, we only argue that principled and pragmatic alternatives to the status quo should be taken seriously rather than dismissed as misguided attempts to "make do" or subvert. A variety of studies show that when the right kinds of enabling conditions are present, motivation, learning, and self-esteem levels

42. Of course, even ethnically or religiously homogeneous schools will be diverse in all kinds of other ways.

often dramatically improve for pupils from disadvantaged minority backgrounds when they attend more homogeneous schools.⁴³ Likewise, there is no shortage of empirical research showing that traditional public schools, diverse and not so diverse, can effectively address issues of discrimination, inequality of instruction and outcomes, climate, and the like. At the same time, there also is no shortage of data indicating that most schools do poorly in this regard. While we are as happy as anyone to see social exclusion ameliorated, cultural boundaries broached, and poor children in the public spaces normally reserved for the privileged, our argument is that the difficult business of dealing directly with inequality must be taken up first, whether or not the institution has achieved the desired balance of us and them, and regardless of who us and them are in particular localities.

Alternatives to “the public school” obviously cannot be the whole story, if for no other reason than most children continue to attend non-alternative public schools. And just like one’s neighborhood school, alternative schools cannot be considered worthwhile unless they feature the conditions that enable students to develop the necessary skills and knowledge in a way that respects their humanity. Part of that respect consists in ensuring that the school engages parents, particularly the least advantaged of them, on equal terms, and permits and facilitates full participation of all students and families. We find it ironic, and not a little disrespectful, that proponents of diversity-first often dismiss as insufficient the potential of simply making schools for marginalized students better, unless questions of diversity are taken up first. As we have seen, the grounds for this refusal to consider any other option besides diversity can generally be found in the tacit belief that important goals — prejudice reduction, on the one hand, and social mobility, on the other — can only be met in self-consciously diverse school environments. Conversely, we have argued that such a view is indefensibly narrow.

CONCLUSIONS

In this essay we have shown how diversity as proxy for educational justice relies on certain premises about how inequality is created and sustained, and about what a “good school” might produce. With respect to prejudice reduction, those premises suppose that diverse environments — and schools in particular — will produce citizens who are freer from prejudice and who are more likely to seek and exercise the powers that attach to their social identities for the common

43. Jaap Dronkers and Rolf van der Velden, “Positive But Also Negative Effects of Ethnic Diversity in Schools on Educational Achievement? An Empirical Test with Cross-National PISA Data,” in *Integration and Inequality in Educational Institutions*, ed. Michael Windzio (London: Springer, 2013), 71–98; Gloria Ladson-Billings, “Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in African-Centered Schools: Possibilities for Progressive Educational Reform,” in *African-Centered Schooling in Theory and Practice*, eds. Diane S. Pollard and Cheryl S. Ajirotutu (Westport, Connecticut: Bergin and Garvey, 2000); Thea Peetsma et al., “Class Composition Influences on Pupils’ Cognitive Development,” *School Effectiveness and School Improvement* 17, no. 3 (2006): 275–302; and Emilie V. Siddle-Walker, “Can Institutions Care? Evidence from the Segregated Schooling of African-American Children,” in *Beyond Desegregation: The Politics of Quality in African American Schooling*, ed. Mwalimu J. Shujaa (Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin, 1996).

good rather than for their private advantage. With respect to social mobility, those premises also maintain that, ideally, the benefits of diversity would flow equally toward all the involved parties, but they are willing to allow that the lion's share of the benefits should flow to the disadvantaged. Seldom is the possibility entertained that in many cases the benefits of increasing diversity might in fact flow mostly toward those already most advantaged. Concerning academics, the preoccupation for many diversity scholars is with segregation and the achievement gap, on the concomitant assumption that the one causes the other. There is, however, no clear evidence of how the causation runs, or even if causation operates at all in this complex system. Much more needs to be determined — often on a case-by-case basis — about the presence of enabling conditions than ethnic or socioeconomic ratios will ever be able to tell us: including factors such as nutrition, family structure, school climate, peer groups, curricular options, student grouping practices, teacher quality and expectations, and neighborhood characteristics, to name just a few.

By way of critique, we have documented a number of serious problems with the diversity thesis. These include an unwillingness to take seriously the structural features of mixed school environments that are persistently deleterious to students of poverty and students from stigmatized ethnic and social class backgrounds. They also include an unwillingness to accept the legal frameworks within which basic freedoms operate, including the right to live where one chooses and associate with others with whom one may share things in common. Diversity advocates also continue to hold out for an unlikely reversal of legal proscription of race/ethnicity-based preferences that have historically served as the mechanism to produce diversity where “naturally” there is little. With good intentions and the conviction that they are fighting the good fight, many pro-diversity advocates often not only remain unaware of how “exposure” chiefly benefits the advantaged, but they also frequently proceed without heeding what members of minority groups themselves care about or may have reason to value. Accordingly, advocates of educational equality bent on disrupting minority concentrations tend to be both blind to the prejudice implied by their beliefs about the intrinsic harms of minority spatial concentrations as well as insensitive to the place attachments and community bonds many members of minority groups cherish.⁴⁴

None of what we have argued should be interpreted to mean that diversity-promoting efforts that aim to foster mutual understanding and shared responsibility are unwise or beyond the realm of possibility. But the point we have tried to drive home is that there are good reasons to be mistrustful of what diversity can accomplish in its present conceptualization, because as policy in practice, it has not shown the capacity to foster mutual understanding or shared responsibility, or to close the achievement gap or increase social mobility, and so on. The value of the radical, positive changes in public attitudes about gender, race/ethnicity,

44. In the urban sociology and educational policy literature, proposals for disrupting or “diversifying” minority communities are as common as they are *de rigueur*. Seldom if ever are proposals advanced that would entail breaking up segregated *majority* communities. For a rare exception, see Tom Slater, “Expulsions from Public Housing.”

sexuality, and ability achieved over the past half century is not diminished by recognizing the persistence, even the reinvention, of racial/ethnic animus and class warfare, expressed most tragically in the lives of children whose opportunities for education and a "life worth living" are so limited. Diversity per se does precious little to fix this. Legions of scholars and advocates have invested their energy in documenting the harms of segregation and the benefits of diverse environments, but, as we have argued, attention must also be directed to justice-promoting reforms that include making nondiverse environments better. That is to say, if we truly care about educational justice in a deeply unjust world, then we need to broaden the purview of pragmatic alternatives we are willing to consider.